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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Sister Joseph, Order of the Grey Nuns of Ottawa. From a glass plate negative made at the George Woodward Studio, Plattsburgh. Clinton County Historical Museum.

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THE GREY NUNS IN PLATTSBURGH

by Allan S. Everest

The Grey Nuns had a history of more than a century before they appeared in Plattsburgh, and their origin is to be found in Montreal. Marguerite d'Youville became a widow with three children in 1730, after only eight years of marriage. She worked hard to support herself and her family but found time for many charitable activities. In 1737 she and three companions founded the Grey Nuns and took their first vows, but a formal declaration followed in 1745, and this date is usually considered the founding year. The Grey Nuns took over the General Hospital in Montreal, and Sister d'Youville was officially confirmed as the first Mother Superior. They supported themselves by fine needlework, sewing and tailoring, boarders and occasional contributions from the public.

Not all of their neighbors harbored kindly feelings toward the nuns, however. By some they were suspected of selling liquor to the Indians in return for their furs. They were therefore disparagingly dubbed "Les soeurs grises," gris meaning "grey" but also "tipsy." In 1755, upon receipt of a royal charter, they adopted a grey habit and kept the old name, which now became one of respect and affection.

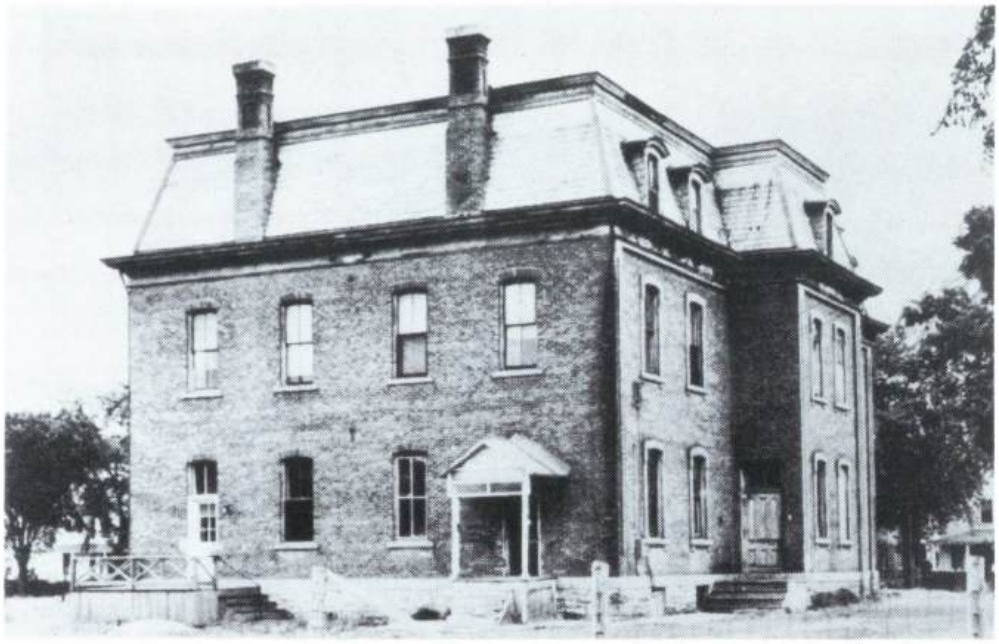
As Mother Superior of the order, Sister d'Youville continued her active life in Montreal until her death in 1771. She was beatified in 1959 by Pope John XXIII, while Pope Pius XII called her the "Mother of universal charity." Meanwhile, Bytown (the later Ottawa) asked the Montreal headquarters for a mission in 1845, and the Grey Nuns subsequently established a school, convent and hospital there. From Ottawa, missions were established in Buffalo in 1857, Plattsburgh in 1860 and Ogdensburg in 1863.

THE PLATTSBURGH SCHOOLS

For more than 60 years, St. Peter's church in Plattsburgh and the Grey Nuns of Ottawa had a close relationship. St. Peter's, established in 1853 following a separation from St. John's, waited only three years to establish its first parochial school. Both church and school stemmed from the desire to create a religious and educational environment that would effectively serve the French Catholics of Plattsburgh.

The parish was fortunate early in its existence to have the dedicated work of the Oblate Fathers, a missionary group which believed strongly in education, as well as the Grey Nuns, long associated with education and nursing. Both groups in Plattsburgh had long-range visions for extending parish activities such as the acquisition of land adjacent to their church. Purchases were made by individuals but always in behalf of their order. An example is the early purchase by the Oblates of land across North Catherine Street from the church on which to build a convent.

The records are unclear where the first parish school was located. There are strong indications that it was conducted in the former Egan house at the corner of Cornelia and St. Charles Streets. Its use was probably obtained through a leasing arrangement; from the start it was known as St. Peter's School, employing lay teachers. The pivotal year of 1860 brought two important developments: the construction of a four-story convent on Cornelia at North Catherine, and the arrival from Ottawa of the first Grey Nuns to occupy the convent and to conduct classes for girls and boys at St. Peter's



The "Red Brick School" at St. Peter's. A History of Catholicism in the North Country, Sister Mary Christine Taylor.

School as well as, later, for boarding and non-boarding girls in the convent. Among the early arrivals was Sister Youville, a distant relative of the founder of the order. Although it was only partly finished, the nuns moved in during the fall. The structure was known at first as D'Youville Convent and also, beginning in 1871, as D'Youville Academy.

Late in the year the convent received its first boarding student, while St. Peter's School enrolled more than 100 children. Two years later the convent served thirteen boarders. By 1865 the parochial school registered 360 students in crowded quarters. In that year, two changes of title to property took place. The Oblate Fathers exchanged with the Grey Nuns land their order owned in Buffalo for the land and convent in Plattsburgh. Further, the Grey Nuns bought the Egan house (St. Peter's School) and the ground on which it stood. They thereby became the owners of the entire frontage on Cornelia Street between North Catherine and St. Charles Streets.

In addition to their teaching duties, the Grey Nuns found the time to visit the poor and sick in their own homes, and they continued to do so until the construction of the Champlain Valley hospital, 46 years later. Meanwhile, they were pleased to see Plattsburgh's first native daughter enter the novitiate in Ottawa; she was Julienne Bertrand, daughter of a prosperous local farmer.

Meanwhile, the vision of the parish leaders often exceeded their finances, and it would be many years before the parish was free from debt. Nevertheless, in 1864 it bought from George Palmer a large tract of land north of the church for $2,500. No construction on the site occurred until early in the next century, however.

Mounting enrollments led to an addition built on St. Peter's School, further straining parish finances. The nuns were paid but $100 a year for the school they operated. In 1866 Father Sallaz, pastor of St. Peter's, appealed to Albany for help. An informal arrangement was worked out whereby the parish, for $150, would lease St. Peter's School to the Plattsburgh Board of Education. The agreement was made official on February 20, 1869, while the Sisters' salary, to be paid by the State, was made retroactive to September of the previous year. This unique relationship between church and state lasted until 1907.

For years the parish contemplated acquiring a building for a larger school. A first step was taken in 1871 when the Grey Nuns bought the entire block north of the convent, land bounded by North Catherine, Elm and St. Charles Streets. This property was once offered by its owner, George Palmer, to the village as a park, but it was refused; nevertheless, it appears in Beer's Atlas of 1869 as "Park." Finally, in

1882 the Grey Nuns erected a large red brick building at their own expense. It was located north of the convent, facing North Catherine Street, approximately where the new school now stands. The Plattsburgh Board of Education furnished three classrooms, the Sisters the other three. The earlier school (the old Egan house) was moved back on church property, where it served a variety of non-educational purposes for many years. The new building, a part of the public school system of Plattsburgh, was often labelled the "Red Brick School," but officially it now became "The Cornelia Street School," although it did not border on Cornelia.

Even this new building did not fulfill all of the needs of the parish. The focus of concern during the 1880s was the education of the older boys. Attempts were made unsuccessfully to obtain some Brothers of Christian Instruction as teachers; however, the parish was given the go-ahead to acquire a separate school for boys, leaving the Cornelia Street School under the Board of Education. Parish leaders considered several pieces of property, including the still-standing original St. John's church (where City Hall now stands), but it and another structure were condemned for their inadequacies by an architect and by higher church authority. Projects for a new school all faced the problem of finances, and were postponed for nearly another generation.

At several meetings at the end of the 1880s, church leaders considered the current relationship with the Board of Education. They decided to leave their school under the rule of the Board, provided that they could teach all of their own children, including boys, and that instruction in grammar and reading could be given in French. The Board agreed to these conditions. The engagement with the School Board was made for a year at a time so as to maintain a maximum of independence. By 1875 there were thirteen Grey Nuns in Plattsburgh. Twenty years later, the highest to date, there were seventeen Grey Nuns teaching a large number of children.

Until 1906 the situation remained stable; the Grey Nuns taught hundreds of boys and girls in the Cornelia Street School and smaller numbers of boarding students in D'Youville Convent. Then the Supreme Court of the United States decided a case which banned the wearing of clerical garb in the public schools of the nation. The New York Commissioner of Education had no choice but to forbid the Grey Nuns in Plattsburgh from wearing their habits in a public school. The relationship with the Board of Education ceased in June 1906, although a protest from the church gained a year's reprieve for the school. But the Red Brick School could no longer be public; the parish assumed charge and employed four Sisters at $200 a year, while students were expected to pay ten cents a week to help with expenses. Until more permanent arrangements could be made, the Brothers of Christian Instruction were pressed into service to teach the smallest boys in the

St. Peter's School on N. Catherine Street. A History of Catholicism, Sister Mary Christine Taylor.

Guard of honor, Society of St. Jean Baptiste. Clinton County Historical Museum.

vestry of the church; older boys would be accommodated at the Brothers' parochial school. Girls and second and third grade boys would be taught by the Sisters at the Red Brick School.

Meanwhile, Plattsburgh taxpayers were faced with the prospect of large increases in their taxes to provide schools and teachers for the potential influx of St. Peter's children into the public school system. But the parish was not ready, after half a century, to relinquish the ideal of educating its own youngsters. Ground was broken for a new school in 1906. It was to be 84 by 73 feet, three stories high, located 50 feet north of the church and facing North Catherine Street. The land was donated to the parish by the Oblate Fathers, who had purchased it in 1864. Also in 1906, a large addition to the convent was built, which now housed 22 Grey Nuns.

École St. Pierre, or St. Peter's School, was dedicated on Labor Day of 1907 although rain prevented the ceremony from being held out of doors. In his address, Reverend Father Lewis pointed out that it was important to develop the intellect, but even more important the moral nature: "It is to supply the latter that is lacking in the public schools." The school opened that fall with about 300 boys and girls as students; the Red Brick School was abandoned and stood unused for many years, but D'Youville Academy continued to educate a limited number of girls.

Meanwhile, another teaching brotherhood had arrived in Plattsburgh. The Brothers of Christian Instruction had come to Canada in large numbers after their expulsion and that of other religious groups from France. In Plattsburgh they acquired the Vilas mansion on North Catherine Street and opened a Juniorate there in 1904. The Juniorate was transferred to Laprairie in 1919; however, once in Plattsburgh the Brothers decided to stay. They opened a boarding and high school for local and Canadian students in 1919; they also agreed to teach 40 boys from St. Peter's parish in the 7th and 8th grades and the four high school years. Their students soon overflowed the old Vilas mansion; in 1923 the Brothers erected a five-story building on the site for about $150,000, keeping the earlier name of Mount Assumption Institute.

The career of the Grey Nuns at St. Peter's was drawing to a close. Because of the establishment of some Grey Nuns independent of Ottawa, known as the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, the Grey Nuns of the Cross of Ottawa decided in 1921 to abandon D'Youville Academy and focus on St. Peter's School only. In the next year the parish bought the convent from the nuns, and the last of them left Plattsburgh after a dynamic presence of 62 years. In 1923 the convent was reopened as St. Peter's Academy under Dominican jurisdiction; the new Sisters maintained it and also taught in St. Peter's School until 1966. And so an old order was ended and a new one begun at St. Peter's. The new order included the erection of a new school which was dedicated in 1960 on the site of the old Red Brick School, demolished to make room for it; also removed as no longer needed was St. Peter's School across the street.

The career in education of the Grey Nuns in Plattsburgh can thus be chronicled:

D'Youville Convent 1860-1922
D'Youville Academy 1871-1921
The first St. Peter's School 1860-1882
Red Brick School 1882-1907
The second St. Peter's School 1907
until their departure in 1922

THE PLATTSBURGH HOSPITAL

At the beginning of the 20th century, Plattsburgh had no hospital. Its seriously ill people had to be cared for in their homes or face a long journey out of town. The Grey Nuns of Ottawa, with their long history of hospital maintenance and with antennae sensing where they were needed, discovered this vacuum in Plattsburgh.

In June 1902 they purchased eight acres on Rugar Street for $3,300. Sister Kirby, Superior General of the Grey Nuns of Ottawa and Sister Demara, treasurer of the order, handled the details of the transaction. The purchase was made by means of a mortgage on D'Youville Academy. The Grey Nuns were careful to obtain promises of support locally from Smith Weed, General Stephen Moffitt, John B. Riley and other leaders of the community. As projected, the hospital would be built by subscription and would be non-denominational but in charge of the Grey Nuns. A group of local incorporators was selected, who chose the name of Plattsburgh City Hospital. The State Board of Charities incorporated the undertaking in 1903 "for the purpose of affording medical and surgical aid and nursing to the sick and disabled persons of every creed, nationality and color."

In August 1902, Sister Anne of Jesus arrived to lead the fund drive. Public meetings were held at the courthouse and elsewhere, articles of incorporation were agreed to and committees were created to raise money in each town. But it was not until four years later that the name of the institution was changed to Champlain Valley Hospital in recognition of the fact that it would serve a wider area of the county than just Plattsburgh; it was probably also anticipated that funds would be more easily raised in other towns without the restrictions inherent in the Plattsburgh name.

Sister Joseph, a Grey Nun. Clinton County Historical Museum.

Fund-raising moved into high gear late in 1902 and continued for several years. Pledge blanks were left in the city's banks. Donors, whether individual or organizational, were urged to furnish a specific section with the inducement that it would bear their name. In this way the women's ward, a semi-private ward, the furniture of the operating room and an Elks Room were some of the resulting donations. Six patients' rooms on the first floor alone were provided by individuals. While fund-raising was still going on, the cornerstone of the building was laid in July 1906. Protestants and Catholics had served on the board, and a rabbi was among the speakers at the ceremony. Funds were still desperately short, however. The financial report for the hospital's first year of operation showed that the total cost of construction had been $129,500 and that $59,000 had been raised, leaving a debt of $70,000. Of this amount, $40,000 was due on its own bonds, while the rest was owed to the builders and banks.

By 1910 the hospital was nearing completion; a local paper called it a "temple of healing built by the generous contributions of a charitable people." When the hospital accepted its first patient in June, the elevator had not arrived and the fourth floor was unfinished, waiting for a demonstration of its need. At first, patients were slow to appear: one on the first day of operation, none on the second and one on the third, with only seven for the first week. From these slow beginnings it gradually expanded to care for several thousand in the course of a year. One reason for its slow growth was the opening of the original Physicians' Hospital on Court Street in 1911, and its new building on Beekman Street, built through the benevolence of William H. Miner in 1926.

A month after the opening of the Champlain Valley Hospital in 1910, a school of nursing was inaugurated. It occupied much of the third floor of the hospital, sharing it with the operating room. The first four graduates completed their work in 1913, which was also the year that the school was registered with the Regents of the University of the State of New York. Crowded as the quarters at the hospital became, a drive for funds for a nurses' residence and classrooms was opened. The six-percent bonds sold well and a new building was opened in 1927; located conveniently nearby, it immediately freed the third floor of the hospital for the use of patients.

The school of nursing accepted nurse-trainees who were women between the ages of 17 and 30 if they were single and citizens and had high school diplomas. Senior students might marry in their last two months of training. In the early 1960s the cost to each student was $231 for the first year, $165 for the second and $190 for the third. Two nuns lived in the nurses' residence, while the rest had rooms on the fourth floor of the hospital.

Throughout these developments the Grey Nuns continued as nurses in the hospital and teachers in the adjoining residence, as well as the managers of both buildings. Mrs. Nellie Hogan of Plattsburgh worked on the switchboard at the hospital for 30 years and she remembers the nuns as devoted and efficient, but "too generous in a way." According to her, the nuns wore their heavy habits the year round and "you could get six dresses out of one of them." In 1921, the nuns' order became the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, an independent American branch of the Grey Nuns of Ottawa; their mother house was now in Yardley, Pennsylvania. During Mrs. Hogan's tenure, which lasted until the hospital was closed, some of the older nuns began to retire and no new ones were named as replacements. In retirement they went to Yardley.

The hospital's services had expanded so much that by 1949 it treated 4,124 patients, a total of 40,113 days' care by 15 Grey Nuns, 30 graduates as general duty nurses plus 78 student and private-duty nurses. Pressure mounted for an expansion; in 1954 a new, large wing was added to the rear of the hospital, which provided an additional capacity of 154 beds.

Optimism over the future was short-lived, however. A projected expansion of the facilities of the Physicians' Hospital and the deterioration of the sixty-year-old Champlain Valley induced a decline in the expectations of a serviceable future. The Grey Nuns withdrew their connection in 1963 and the building was condemned four years later. Meanwhile, the expansion of the Physicians' Hospital was under way. A three-sided arrangement was concluded whereby the expanding hospital would bear the joint name of Champlain Valley Physicians' Hospital, while the State University of New York acquired all of the land and buildings of the former Champlain Valley Hospital in 1967 for about $2,000,000.

The original plan of the local college was to demolish the buildings and construct more residence halls on the site. State University was beginning to veto more dormitories, however. The old hospital stood vacant for several years while college activities swirled around it. It became a distinct hazard when falling cornices led to the fencing off of large areas at the front of the building. Finally, University budgeting allowed its demolition in 1978, but not before the local college agreed to find uses for the large annex and the former nurses' residence. Use of the annex has fluctuated from faculty offices and classrooms to merely a storage area; the nurses' residence was happily spared, if for no other reason than its attractive architecture. Today it houses several departments of the faculty as well as classrooms on the ground floor, where once the nurses received instruction.

Physical reminders of the labors of the Grey Nuns in Plattsburgh are still visible in the former convent at St. Peter's and the former nurses' residence on the college campus. Their social and religious impact is less tangible. At the time of their arrival, Plattsburgh had little in the way of parochial education and no hospital at all. They can therefore be credited with enriching the North Country with both of these institutions. They clearly gave the initial impetus to today's large enterprises in both education and hospital care.

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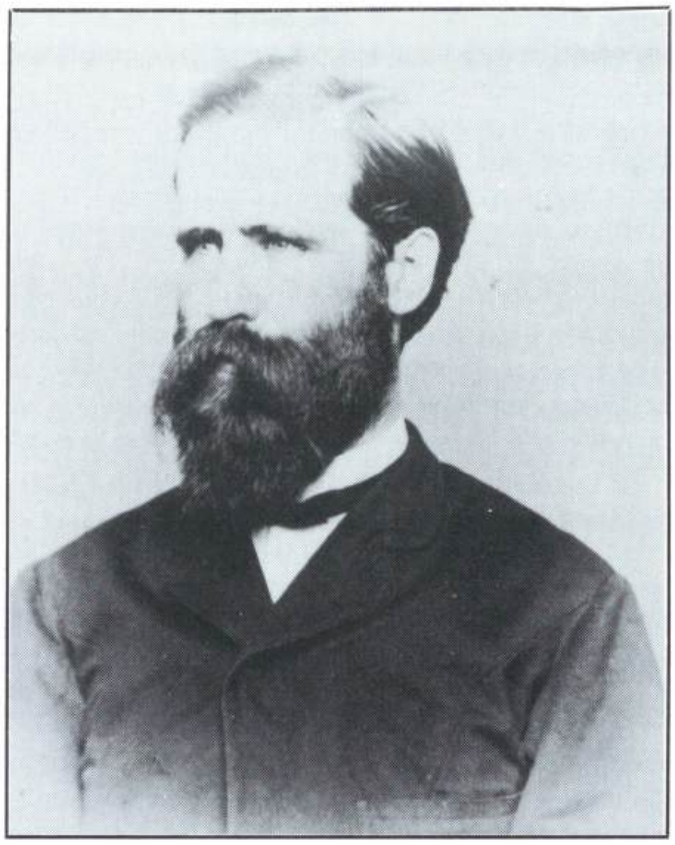
Laying the cornerstone of the Champlain Valley Hospital, 1906. Clinton County Historical Museum.

C.V. Hospital, partially demolished, 1978. Author's collection.

SMITH WEED AND THE POLITCAL ECONOMY OF NORTHERN NEW YORK

by Elise Miller St. Pierre



On a chilly November day in 1875, a grand excursion celebrated the newly-finished railroad which connected Montreal with New York City. Thomas Dickson, president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, had invited America's rich and famous to witness the triumph. John Jacob Astor, J. Pierpont Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Chester A. Arthur and William H. Vanderbilt were all aboard the maiden voyage of the eleven-car train pulled by an engine dubbed the "Saratoga."

Departing from New York City, the train headed for Albany where it stopped for the first night. The next day the train continued northward towards Whitehall, where the newest track began. At Saratoga, the Hon. Smith M. Weed, the 'father' of the link from Albany to Plattsburgh, joined the distinguished party. Relaxed in the luxury of a first-class passenger car, America's royalty enjoyed the natural beauty of northern New York. At each depot, the train was greeted by excited spectators. Imagine the feeling of accomplishment and pride of the one man whose efforts were instrumental in the completion of the final link in the railroad between New York City and Montreal - Smith M. Weed.

Weed had been relentless in pursuit of his cause. What motivated his determination to expand the railroad? By focusing on his contributions to the expansion of the D & H Railroad, it is possible to explore the connections between the political system and the economic modernization of the North Country.

The 19th century became legendary for its 'self-made' men and rags-to-riches stories, but Smith Weed was not one of those. He came from one of the North Country's most advantaged families. His father, Roswell Alcott, was the owner of Weed's Mill in Bellmont, 30 miles west of Plattsburgh. He was also elected the first Supervisor of that town. From the beginning, Weed was assured of a dominant position in the North Country.

This area in which Weed grew to maturity was far from cosmopolitan, it was isolated and parochial. Aside from agriculture, the economy was primarily supported by timber and iron industries. Worse,

from Weed's perspective, the town was more French than American. Sixty percent of the population was immigrant and most of those were French Canadian. The already existing Plattsburgh and Montreal Railroad made it very convenient for Canadians to travel back and forth across the border. In fact, on the 4th of July, trainloads of French Canadians would come to Plattsburgh to celebrate the national holiday. The Village Trustees worried about rowdiness and hired extra constables to patrol the area around the French Catholic church, where Canadians made merry all day.

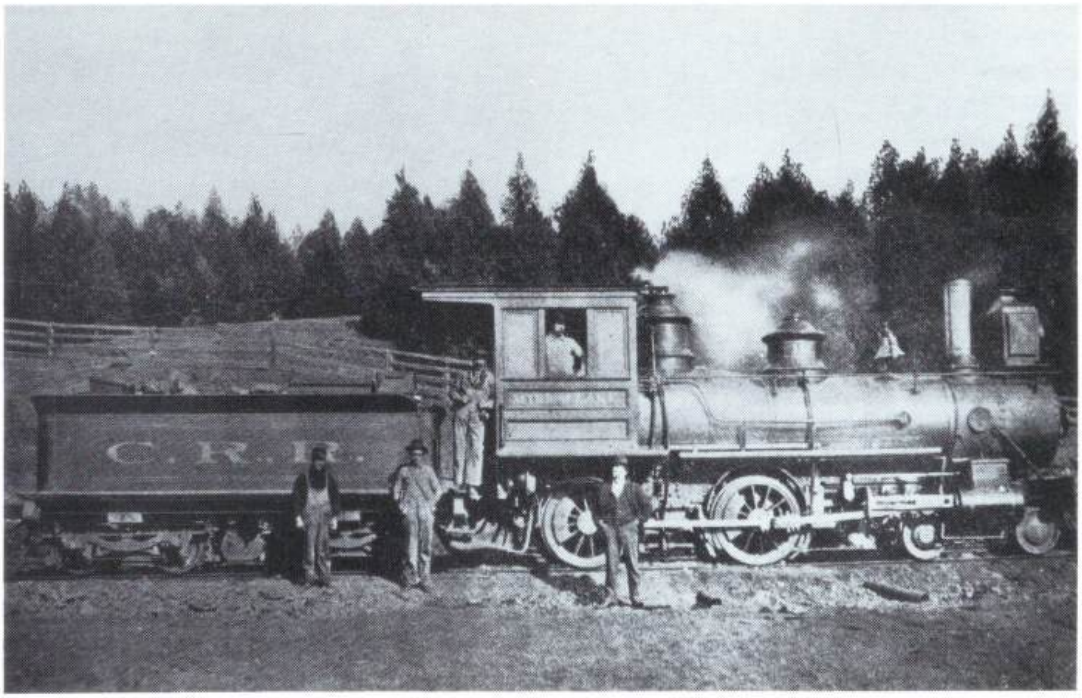
To Weed the economic benefits of a railroad link to the south would have been obvious. Markets and connections with New York City rather than Canada would promote commerce; perhaps he hoped the railroad would also anglicize Plattsburgh's French culture.

On January 1, 1856 Weed was admitted to the Bar. In the next year he obtained his law degree from Harvard, a distinction few from the North Country could claim. Marriage also enhanced Weed's status in Plattsburgh. After he became established in his profession, Weed married Caroline Standish, daughter of a wealthy local businessman. Weed became part of Plattsburgh's elite.

In 1868 Weed, in partnership with Foot, Meade and Waldo, other prominent businessmen, bought property on Lyon Mountain, 20 miles west of Plattsburgh. By 1873, Weed and Andrew Williams created the Chateaugay Ore Company. The problem was accessibility. Ore was mined from the beds and then transported by steamer to the company's forge at Bellmont. After it was processed, the iron was transported to Chateaugay, then shipped by the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Railroad to steel districts in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

As of that date, the railroad systems did not connect the North Country with the lower region of New York state. On the east side of Lake Champlain, railroads connected Burlington with Boston. On the west side of the lake the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain carried traffic through Rouses Point into Vermont on its way to Boston, while the Plattsburgh & Montreal Railroad headed north through Mooers Junction. With a new Plattsburgh to Albany link, Weed would have direct access to New York City, the largest commercial port in the United States.

By the early 1870s, Weed was in a position of leadership and power at both local and state levels. He sat on the village board and on the board of a local bank, and in 1865 he became the president of the Board of Trustees of the village. As the leading Democrat in Plattsburgh, Weed could count on the support of the Democratic newspaper, the Plattsburgh *Republican*. He was also elected a member



A narrow-gauge locomotive of the Chateaugay Railroad, 1880. It served both Dannemora Prison and Weed's iron mines at Lyon Mt. A History of the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company, Delaware & Hudson.

The Smith Weed residence on Cumberland Avenue, Plattsburgh. Initial construction by Christopher Norton was completed by Weed for his home. Later it housed the American Legion, Post 20 until its ruin by fire in 1989. Industrial Edition of the Plattsburgh Daily Press, 1897.

of the New York Assembly seven times from 1865 to 1874. He was credited with the Free Schools Act of 1867, which made the state's public schools free to all. This law not only benefited the North Country but it was also in the interest of the wealthy like Smith Weed because they did not have to pay such large school taxes any longer. But Weed's most notable accomplishment was his commitment to the integration of Plattsburgh into the national economy, symbolized by his role in building the New York and Canada Railroad.

Weed's political involvement with the railroad was in direct contradiction to his political affiliation with the Democratic party. The traditional role of that party was the representation of the poor, the immigrants and the working class; it was dedicated to the least amount of government intervention in the economy. As a representative of this party, Weed was theoretically obligated to follow these policies.

Weed spoke of his support for the "common man" in a number of public addresses. In one of 1884 which considered a proposed tariff, he stated that both the Republicans and Democrats wanted to see the tariff lowered but the Democrats wanted it for the "protection to our American Laborers," while the Republicans wanted to protect business "monopolies." In September, 1890 Weed spoke to a group of farmers at a local fair. He told them that the "farmers of the United States are the backbone of its wealth and prosperity." He praised their judgment by saying that "the destiny of the republic was safe in their hands."

Weed went to great lengths to maintain his public image of a benevolent, altruistic politician. In 1891 and 1892 he provided Christmas dinners for several thousand of Plattsburgh's poor, either at a specified restaurant or in their own homes if they were unable to come for them. Although it started as an anonymous gesture, by the second year everyone knew that Smith Weed was the benefactor. But was Weed really protecting the interests of his constituency and the Democratic party?

As a member of the New York legislature, Weed was able to use his political position to further the development of the railroad. He sat on the Committee on Railroads in various years. It was the responsibility of this committee to investigate railroads and to make sure that all the laws were being followed correctly. Other Assemblymen also sat on this committee, but none as often as Weed. Because he possessed the ability to influence legislation, his business enterprises benefited.

During the years Weed was politically supporting the railroad, various laws were passed. In 1867, bills to facilitate the construction of the railroad link between Whitehall and Plattsburgh were proposed in the Assembly. In 1868 a bill was proposed to aid its construction. The amount of the appropriation was $5,000 a mile, and the company could collect this money from the Treasurer of the state after any ten miles or more of the road were completed. In 1869, "An act to authorize the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad Company to take increased fare and to establish a ferry" was passed. A passenger's fare was to be increased to five cents per mile and the company was authorized to establish and maintain a railroad ferry across Lake Champlain. Both the increased fare and the ferry were to continue until the completion of the railroad connection. Another law in 1869 permitted towns to subsidize the construction of railroads. According to local newspapers, it was more than coincidence that Smith Weed was an Assemblyman during this time.

If Weed was considered an influential ally, he could also be a lethal enemy. In 1871 he was not re-

elected to the Board of Directors of the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad. At a meeting to elect the Board, Weed and other members of the "Plattsburgh Ring" were accused of attempting to run the railroad the way Tammany Hall was running New York City. Directors from Essex County compared the "Railroad Ring" and its leader to "Fisk and the Erie Railroad on a smaller territory." They wanted to remind the ring that there were towns in northern New York that needed railroad service besides Plattsburgh and Black Brook.

It appears that Essex County representatives did not like the proposed route through Black Brook, Jay and Wilmington which was advocated by Weed and others from Clinton County. Instead, they wanted it to go through the Schroon Valley and Boquet River areas. They also wanted to lease the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Company to the Rutland and Burlington Railroad. Weed would not ratify this action unless the Vermont-based company would agree to complete the building of the road within three years. By not re-electing Weed and his colleagues, the Essex County representatives were able to control the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Company.

Weed used his position as Assemblyman to crush the revolt within the railroad company. He realized that to his opponents the railroad ferry was an important asset of the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad, so he proposed to repeal the ferry rights. After a power struggle between Weed and the Essex County representative, Mr. Delano, the Assembly voted against repeal.

Having lost control of the railroad company, Weed decided to create a new one. In 1872, "An act to facilitate construction of the New York and Canada Railroad" was passed by the Assembly. It provided that Weed's railroad was authorized the same rights and provisions that had been given to the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Company. It also provided that funds originally appropriated to the Whitehall and Plattsburgh would be reappropriated to the first company completing the railroad connection. Weed would not think this threatening to his company because the Whitehall and Plattsburgh had been leased to rival railroads based in Vermont. These companies did not want a route connecting northern New York to New York City because it would be damaging to their companies, which serviced Boston.

Smith Weed's park on Cumberland Avenue. Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh

An 1869 law was very beneficial to Weed's railroad; it allowed villages and towns to subsidize private railroad companies. It also provided that private companies would have the same representation and rights as individual taxpayers. In practice, if five companies consented to bond and they made up 51% of the taxable property in Plattsburgh, then the town would bond regardless of the wishes of the rest of the taxpayers. Designed to aid railroad companies, this law gave wealthy people and business owners the deciding vote on whether public funds would subsidize private corporations. In this case, Weed's position in town government insured the subsidization of his own company.

Before the New York and Canada would begin construction, the company demanded that the towns along the prospective route put up a $100,000 bond. In 1871, when Weed was in the Assembly, various towns including Plattsburgh consented to bond. The 1871 Tax Assessment Roll was used to measure public consent to the bond. By using this to determine public wishes, the voice of Plattsburgh's poor who did not own property was not heard. It is apparent from the assessment roll that Plattsburgh's majority immigrant population had no role in the important decision, either.

Wealth Distributions According to 1871 Tax Assessment Roll

Town of Plattsburgh

	Taxpayers	Consenters #	Consenters %
$1-$500	662	164	24
$501-$1,000	183	68	37
$1,001-$5,000	255	98	38
$5,001-$10,000	30	15	50
$10,001 and up	19	10	52

Town of Champlain

	Taxpayers	Consenters #	Consenters %
$1-$500	415	78	18
$501-$1,000	87	25	28
$1,001-$5,000	163	60	36
$5,001-$10,000	16	4	25
$10,001 and up	6	2	33

Town of Chazy

	Taxpayers	Consenters #	Consenters %
$1-$500	345	66	19
$501-$1,000	77	22	28
$1,001-$5,000	146	51	34
$5,001-$10,000	4	0	0
$10,001 and up	5	1	20

Town of Essex

	Taxpayers	Consenters #	Consenters %
$1-$500	113	60	53
$501-$1,000	34	25	73
$1,001-$5,000	79	58	73
$5,001-$10,000	12	7	58
$10,001 and up	2	2	100

Instead, there are signatures of prominent men like W.W. Hartwell, C.F. Norton and Smith Weed himself. Despite the fact that this important decision was made by a minority of Plattsburgh's citizens, there was no visible opposition to the bond. However, other communities did object. In Smith Weed's own correspondence, there is evidence of communities showing opposition to the bond. His agent in Keeseville declared: "We have got to make the most desperate exertions in this town for names as nearly all of the west part of the town's against us." Weed did not seem to control Keeseville in the same way he did Plattsburgh.

As a result of the bonding issue, the town of Essex brought charges against the New York and Canada Railroad. Apparently the taxpayers consented to bond $40,000 under the Essex-County-controlled Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railroad Company. When the New York and Canada Company gained possession of the line, it also took over the Essex bond. Legally, the town's complaint was that a county judge appointed three bonding commissioners. This violated a legislative act of 1872 stating that the Supreme Court judge rather than county judge was assigned this responsibility. The taxpayers of Essex also wanted the company to terminate the bond and refund the $40,000. Their claim was based on a law passed on January 1, 1875 which prohibited any town from giving money or property, or taking stocks or bonds in any private corporation. Perhaps the fact that the New York and Canada Railroad did not enter the town of Essex may have also helped to motivate the lawsuit.

The D. & H. railroad station, Bridge Street, Plattsburgh, built in 1886. Mary G. Leggett collection.

After the towns had bonded, representatives of the railroad company were sent to gain "rights of way" from landowners. According to Weed's correspondence, agents were buying a right-of-way for $50 to $75 an acre without provisions for railroad crossings. S.W. Safford sold his right-of-way to the company for $50. He asked the land agent to "put in writing" that the company would also build him a crossing because the tracks were going to divide his land in half. Because Weed had instructed this agent "not to put in any conditions," the agent told Safford that he "would write to the company" about the matter.

If an agreement could not be reached, an act "to authorize the formation of railroad corporations and to regulate the same," passed in 1850, detailed the proper procedures for acquiring title to the land. The company had to petition the Supreme Court and ask for an appointment of commissioners of appraisal. They would appraise the property and report to the Supreme Court judge, who would then set the price at which the company could purchase the land. In all cases the landowners were required to yield title to the company.

Because some records are not available, it is impossible to determine how many people in Clinton County sought judicial assistance in dealing with the New York and Canada Railroad. In the records that have survived, there was only one case in which a group of people petitioned the Supreme Court for assistance. In 1876 Judge J.L. Landon conducted a hearing on the "application of the New York and Canada Railroad Company to acquire title to land in the Towns of Chazy and Champlain." Judge Landon appointed three disinterested persons to appraise the land and determine equitable compensations for the owners.

Records in Essex County provide evidence that residents there were more rebellious than in Clinton County. The towns of Willsboro and Essex sued the company; individuals also initiated litigation against it. In 1872 an agent wrote to Weed that a local farmer

claimed $1,500 in damages because the railroad cut his buildings off from water and took nine acres of his land. The agent talked him down to $1,000 but the farmer threatened to have his land appraised rather than take less than $1,000. In 1874, Isaac Harris went to court to have his land appraised. He received compensation of $64.78 for damages. Harris must have been dissatisfied with this award because he later filed an appeal.

Laws had not always been so favorable to industry, however. Under the early influence of leaders like Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, the government passed laws which were in the interest of farmers and an agrarian society. For example, early laws required railroad companies to be responsible for all damages brought about by their systems. It was not until the mid-1800's that the government became a loyal ally of business and transportation industries. A turning point was reached in 1850 when the legislature gave railroads the power to "acquire" land. After its enactment, there was no legal recourse available to landowners who did not wish to sell their property to a corporation. Soon it was popular practice to pass laws that visibly benefited railroad companies. The government had come to believe that business and transportation industries were indispensable to economic development.

A common campaign slogan to rouse public support for the railroad was that it would bring prosperity to the North Country. Newspaper articles promised that if a railroad line connecting Montreal and New York City were built, real estate in Clinton and Essex counties, within fifteen miles of the route, would triple in value. Prophecies were made that the production of iron ore would double, which would introduce capital into the North Country. Not only would a railroad connection spur the growth and importance of the North Country, but it would also add to the trade and prosperity of southern regions of the state such as Troy, Albany and New York City.

After the completion of the railroad connection, the North Country did enjoy a measure of economic prosperity, but this improvement was short-lived and experienced by only a few. For example, in 1880 there were more iron mines in Clinton and Essex counties than there were in 1865. Yet by the early 1900s it was apparent that the heyday of mining in the Adirondacks had come to an end. The total number of farms in the North Country decreased from 1880 to 1900. The population of the two counties also contradicted the earlier promises: from 1860 to 1880 the population of both counties increased substantially, then from 1880 to 1900 it dropped dramatically.

Among the few who did prosper from the arrival of the railroad was Smith Weed. With access to downstate markets, Weed's ore mine at Lyon Mountain became the chief mining center in the area. In 1886, according to the tax roll, Weed also claimed vested interest in five prominent businesses located in Plattsburgh. His personal wealth was estimated, probably at a fraction of its real value, at $23,575, and his property was valued at $12,950. The railroad to the North Country may not have benefited the majority of Plattsburgh's population but it did serve Smith Weed's best interests.

The New York and Canada Railroad was a catalyst for the economic modernization of the North Country. But what were the political costs? Was democracy sacrificed for economic development? The evidence suggests it was. Landowners were forced to sell their property by legislative acts that did not represent the interests of the community but, instead, the interests of the company.

Taxpayers were forced to subsidize the railroad, which produced private profit. The majority of citizens in Clinton County towns did not consent to the bond which authorized the railroad company to issue municipal stock. Residents of Essex County sued the railroad to get their money back. Moreover, the economic prosperity which was to permeate the North Country benefited only a few and was short-lived. Clearly, the method used to promote modernization in the North Country appeared to violate the popular will.

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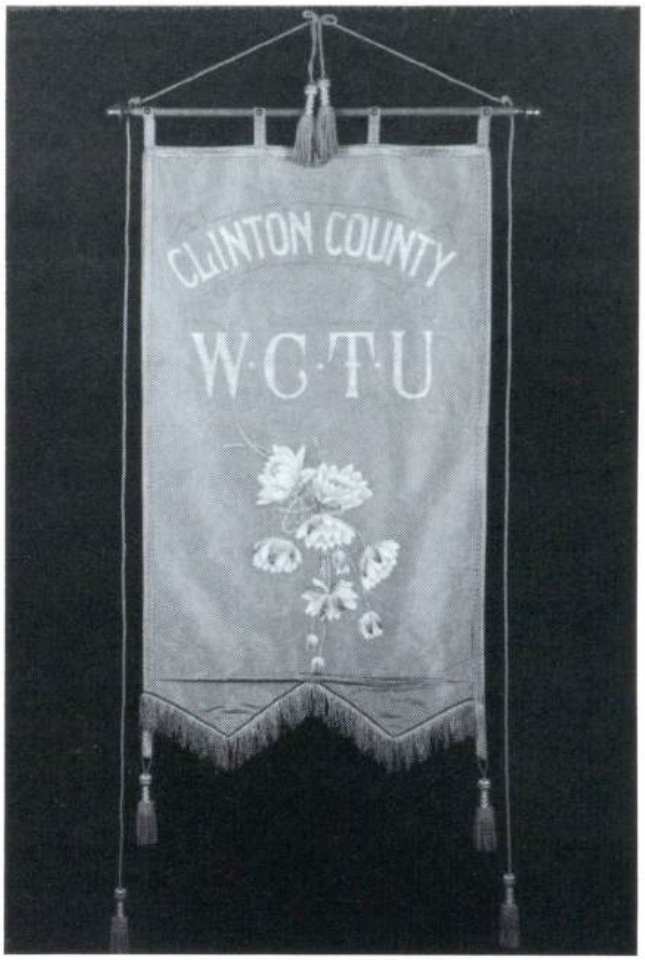
THE W.C.T.U. FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS

by Susan Sweeney-Patnode



WCTU banner, hand painted on blue silk. Clinton County Historical Museum.

The national Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed in 1874 on the heels of what is commonly known as the Women's Crusade. This spontaneous movement, which began in 1873 against saloons and liquor sellers, swept the Midwest and spread to the East during the following year. The women involved in this action used prayer-ins to induce owners of liquor establishments to close. They enjoyed a considerable amount of short-term success but it soon became clear that the anti-liquor fight was far from won. In late 1874, the national WCTU was formed.

Women joined the temperance movement in unprecedented numbers. There was a long history of activist women reformers coming out of earlier moral reform movements and abolition. More women flocked to temperance because it was seen as a woman's issue. Women and children in the home were the victims of drunken men, and thus temperance became a maternal struggle focused on home protection which they clearly viewed as their proper sphere of influence. It should be noted that the temperance movement developed in response to a social evil that was both real and widespread; "evil drink" was most threatening to the home.

On the national level, the WCTU functioned as the organizational framework through which many women became increasingly active and thus visible on a public issue. It acted as the umbrella structure of numerous local unions, which operated within the rubric of the national but were in many ways independent. The women in these local unions, while openly advocating temperance as the reason for their activity, often had underlying motivations.

The Clinton County union illustrates this premise, where it served a dual function for the women involved. It provided a framework in which they could be publicly active on an issue they considered vital - temperance. The formal function, while being theoretically dominant, was not the only benefit. The WCTU on a local, state and national level provided a structure through which women could meet together frequently, a contact that would have been close to impossible otherwise. It facilitated the formation of intimate supportive relationships which also functioned to keep women active in temperance. This underlying outcome served to keep individual women dedicated to the WCTU in order to maintain these relationships. Thus the WCTU performed two functions for the women: the eradication of alcohol consumption and the formation and maintenance of close social relationships.

ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE

The first local union was formed in Plattsburgh by Frances Delord Hall in 1874, on the heels of the Women's Crusade. Mrs. Hall solicited information on various aspects of the liquor trade. She received letters from Edward A. Lawrence, Jr. of Champlain informing her where she could acquire a list of liquor ingredients, and from Charles Rorkwell of Hadley, New York and S.S. Wirram of Malone discussing excise laws. The Plattsburgh Union elected Mrs. Hall as secretary, in which capacity she served until the formation of the Clinton County organization (CC-WCTU) in 1887. She was elected county president in that year and held the position until her death in 1913. During that time she also periodically served as secretary to the Plattsburgh Union; it received little publicity and its activities remain largely unknown. With the formation of the CC-WCTU, the functions served by the WCTU became clearer.

The local unions operated within a hierarchical framework. Each one had four officers - President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The county group also had four officers, as did the state, with the addition of one secretary. The unions operated quite independently; their activity was locally generated and they were not ultimately responsible to the state or national organizations. The state and county unions seemed to have little real authority except to deny membership.

A local union became a member of the county or state WCTU through the payment of membership dues. In 1890 the Plattsburgh Union paid $12 in state dues and $6 in county dues for 60 members. Each member paid twenty cents in state dues and ten cents in county dues. A union was supposed to forward these dues but this obligation seems to have been frequently shirked. Eleanor Tenney, state treasurer, frequently expressed dismay over the financial viability of the state organization, as in 1890:

> If all counties were as willing to aid the state WCTU as Clinton is, our work "for God and Home and Native Land" would be much less difficult.

On all levels of organization, various departments were organized. Each had a superintendent who managed activity in her field. Each local union might have one or more departments, while the county usually had several. The state and national superintendents traveled extensively throughout state and nation giving lectures to county and local unions, often after soliciting their own engagements. Among others, Frances E. Greenwood, World and National Superintendent of Evangelistic Work in Brooklyn, inquired whether the Clinton County Union would like her to speak.

There was a great variety of departments in Clinton County between 1887 and 1900 (only records available) but the ones for which some activity is recorded are Scientific Temperance, Temperance Literature, Fair Work, Flower Mission, Sabbath School Work, and Parlor Meetings.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

The work of the local unions of the CC-WCTU can be categorized into four distinct yet often overlapping areas of activity: educating the young, providing alternative refreshment and activity to alcohol consumption, disseminating temperance information to the public, and self-propagating activities.

The ladies felt that reaching the young before they could be corrupted by alcohol was essential. At county conventions, resolutions often advocated increased attention to Sunday school work and the pursuit of temperance instruction there. Funds were allocated to Sunday school work but its nature remains unclear. At least by 1893, Sabbath school

temperance leaflets were being stocked by the county organization. The CC-WCTU further distributed leaflets entitled "Scientific Monthly Advice" to every Clinton County school teacher (approximately 256).

A Juvenile Temperance School was in existence in 1889 but no other information is available on it. The youth focus extended to the formation of "Ys" - Young Women's Christian Temperance Unions. A number of towns had both a women's and a young women's CTU, including Peru and Saranac Lake. The activities of the youth unions included assisting the women's unions, sending flowers with Bible messages to county prisoners and to a children's hospital in New York City, and contributing to the education and clothing of a local underprivileged girl.

Much time was also spent in providing alternatives to alcohol consumption. During the 19th century, alcohol was a staple of the diet because water was often difficult to acquire and frequently impure. In consequence, the WCTU provided alternative beverages to alcohol in public places. Each year at the county fair, the WCTU set up a tent to dispense free non-alcoholic drinks. In 1888 it was an ice-water tent. Each summer, the WCTU placed ice-water tanks at Customs House Square in downtown Plattsburgh. The Peru union served coffee at the polls on election day in 1897. The Saranac Lake union held ten-cent teas biweekly in 1891.

The WCTU also tried to provide alternative activities to drinking. They were designed to fill social needs often met by alcohol-related gatherings. In 1898, a day excursion on Lake Champlain was organized; parlor meetings were held to provide opportunities for social gatherings and temperance discussions. Prayer meetings and lectures were presented as specifically temperance-related rather than purely alternative activities. The distribution of flowers and fruit to the poor and ill was designed to lift their spirits and perhaps keep them out of a depression that might lead to drink.

Most WCTU activities included the distribution of temperance information, whether in the beverage tent at the fair, fruit and flowers, or public gathering places such as railroad stations. From 1888 to 1897, a WCTU column was published in the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* which included both articles of local import and essays on the effects of alcohol and the status of the temperance movement. The ladies were addressing an audience which they viewed as literate and susceptible to appeals to their morality. They distributed pledge cards which contained statements such as the following:

> We, the women of Plattsburgh, hereby pledge ourselves not to use, or countenance the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage in our families; neither will we use them in any social or public gathering, or countenance their use at any such gathering over which we may have control, nor will we, under any circumstances, offer an intoxicating beverage to any person.

The women also sent petitions to the excise board with this message:

> We the undersigned voters and residents of Cumberland Head, earnestly protest against the granting of any license at any time to sell intoxicating liquors or beverages on Cumberland Head, as we are convinced that it is unnecessary and uncalled for and detrimental to the best interests of this peace and order-loving community. We beg the board of excise to see to it that no license at any time be granted.

This petition was signed by 58 men and women, but no indication of its impact is given. The women also attended meetings of the excise board to protest the granting of liquor licenses. The WCTU column detailed their activities in 1890 and 1891, of which this notation of 1890 is typical:

> A delegation of ladies was present, among them the aged mother of one of the expected applicants who came to protest the granting of a license to her son. Mrs. F.D. Hall made an earnest plea against the granting of any more licenses.

The ladies took a determined public stance on this issue and acted in highly visible ways. Their activities stemmed from their conception of themselves as mothers protecting the home from the devil drink. In doing so, they stepped beyond the confines of their individual homes and faced a world they believed was in need of the ministering of mothers. They took the temperance cause to heart and worked assiduously to promote their viewpoint while making sure their organization remained active and continuous.

Self-propagation for the WCTU meant the recruitment of new members and the formation of new unions. The cause was seen as so universal that

Mrs. Frances (Fanny) Delord Hall. Courtesy of the Kent-Delord House Museum.

every town and village should have a union. Ada Beers wrote that "an effort *must* be made in Essex Co. for reinforcements for the Temperance army...thinks you Ellenburg Center, Lewis, Jay?" (backsliding towns).

Each year, unions were lost but new ones were formed. Membership drives were organized as contests in which two groups would compete for members and the winning one receive a banquet given by the losers. The formation of "Y" unions also promised to insure the continuation of the organization. These self-propagating activities remain largely undocumented. Many of the same individuals remained in positions of authority throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the time period of this study, but the organization in Plattsburgh remained in existence until at least 1933, a commentary on its continuing ability to attract new members and leadership once the old leaders were gone.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Much of the work of the WCTU served dual functions for the women involved. Life for rural women in the late 19th century did not provide many opportunities for social gatherings. Many, if not most, women were farm wives, whose work schedule began at dawn and ended long after sunset. The few opportunities for socializing usually took place in church-related activities. Visiting was time-consuming and during much of the year traveling was very difficult. Roads were poor and the women were often simply unable to leave their work at home.

The WCTU provided an opportunity for women to meet under the rubric of a socially legitimate gathering. They did not have to feel guilty for taking time away from their families because temperance work was seen as pro-family. Local unions provided women with the opportunity to meet together, but often these women saw each other fairly regularly anyway. The Plattsburgh union held weekly meetings, while other area groups met with less regularity.

A more important motivation for membership was county or state meetings. The county organization held three conventions each year from 1888 to at least 1904. An annual convention was held in September, while winter and summer conventions fell in January or February and June respectively. These meetings provided a rare opportunity for large numbers of women to meet. Receipts from printing companies indicate that between 200 and 400 programs were printed for conventions during the early 1890s.

Each union was allowed to send its officers plus an additional delegate for every ten members. The county organizers clearly felt a need to limit the number of women who could attend, which testifies to the popularity of these gatherings. They provided an opportunity for socializing that one might rarely, if ever, see otherwise. Likewise, state and national conventions created occasions for women who had the financial ability to meet with other women from all over the state or nation. These gatherings allowed the women to feel that they were a part of a large movement which extended beyond local boundaries, and gave them a sense of belonging and a feeling of

importance not experienced in their day-to-day activities. The CC-WCTU went a long way to combat the isolation of women in rural areas. Temperance was a grass-roots movement and rural women were the mainstay of the organization.

If one looks carefully at the work undertaken, the frequency of meetings and conventions seems vastly out of proportion. Convention programs listed topics of lectures such as "Temperance Work in the Catholic Church," "Present Aspects of the Temperance Question," "What Are the Aims of the WCTU?", and "How Do the Saloons Recruit?" Conventions were reported in CC-WCTU columns, with much emphasis on the hospitality of host unions and the decoration of the meeting area. Little space was devoted to actual speech content or import.

Few substantial guidelines to eradicate drinking seem to have been provided. Local women spoke, went home and were written up in the paper. Actual work was apparently unaffected by these gatherings. The influence and inspiration they may have had on individual women is, of course, unmeasurable. Judging by program outlines, no one ever spoke on actual work accomplished or gains made. The presentations seem to have been largely theoretical. There is no information available on what occurred in local union meetings. Some organizational activity must have taken place on such matters as fair work and the distribution of leaflets. However, these pursuits hardly warranted weekly meetings or three-yearly conventions. The main function conventions seem to have accomplished was the fostering of a sense of togetherness in the cause.

The county conventions were organized and presided over by Frances Delord Hall. She is the only individual for whom there are records indicating that she attended, at least occasionally, state and national conventions. She was dedicated to the temperance movement wholeheartedly and developed or strengthened many intimate friendships as a result of her perseverance. She corresponded with individuals on the local, state and national levels and served them in a variety of capacities. The resulting friendships exemplify the presence of a subculture of strong, intimate, supportive relationships which motivated the WCTU and kept the women involved, active and inspired.

The letters between Mrs. Hall and Louise Rounds, Illinois state president, illustrate the importance of these affectionate relationships to the WCTU women. Rounds wrote frequently, clearly trusting and relying on FDH as confidante in both personal and WCTU matters. She refers to FDH in a very intimate fashion, stating, "my precious friend, how I wish I could make your home my *resting place between dates* and have you direct my *physical* ways and comfort me in spiritual things...yours to me I read with brimming eyes as I often do when I feast myself upon your words of love."

In November 1901, Rounds was forced out of her position in Illinois. She moved to Clifton Springs, New York, and became increasingly involved in the activities of the state WCTU. Her letters always


"O, Woman! Great is Thy Faith; be it unto Thee even as Thou Wilt."

EIGHTH CONVENTION

OF THE

CLINTON COUNTY

WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION,

TO BE HELD IN THE

METHODIST CHURCH,

Schuyler Falls, N. Y.,

ON

FRIDAY, JUNE 20th, 1890.

All Friends of Temperance are Cordially Invited to Attend.

Cover of the county's WCTU conference program, held at Schuyler Falls in 1890. Clinton County Historical Museum.

closed with expressions of love and devotion such as "most affectionately yours, friend and coworker." Her friendships were WCTU friendships and FDH, as an example, provided her with the support and love that served to keep her active and motivated.

FDH communicated with a number of other women and shared relationships similar to those with Rounds. She was both advisor and confidante. Ada Beers, state supervisor of Sabbath school work, wrote to her concerning the formation of new unions: "Do, I beg, give me the benefit of your greater light." When Frances Graham became state WCTU president, she was very fearful that her work would be inadequate. She wrote a series of letters to FDH expressing these feelings.

FDH provided support to Emma Dietrick, member of the state executive committee, upon the revelation of some personal trouble which she feared would affect her position in the WCTU. Dietrick wrote that "yours was the first face for which I looked, and the sympathy and love that spoke in every feature loosened the tightness of my heart." FDH received numerous invitations to share bed and board at the state convention in Glens Falls in 1901 and chose to stay with the state officers. They wrote to her subsequently to express pleasure in her companionship. Eleanor Tenney, state treasurer, stated that "we all enjoyed the companionship of your own dear self." Frances Graham, corresponding secretary, wrote that "we did enjoy it there and we enjoyed having you with us to make our number complete." Ella Boole, state president, commented on the trust they held in her - "we were free to talk about many things before you, that we could not have before many people, because we could trust you implicitly."

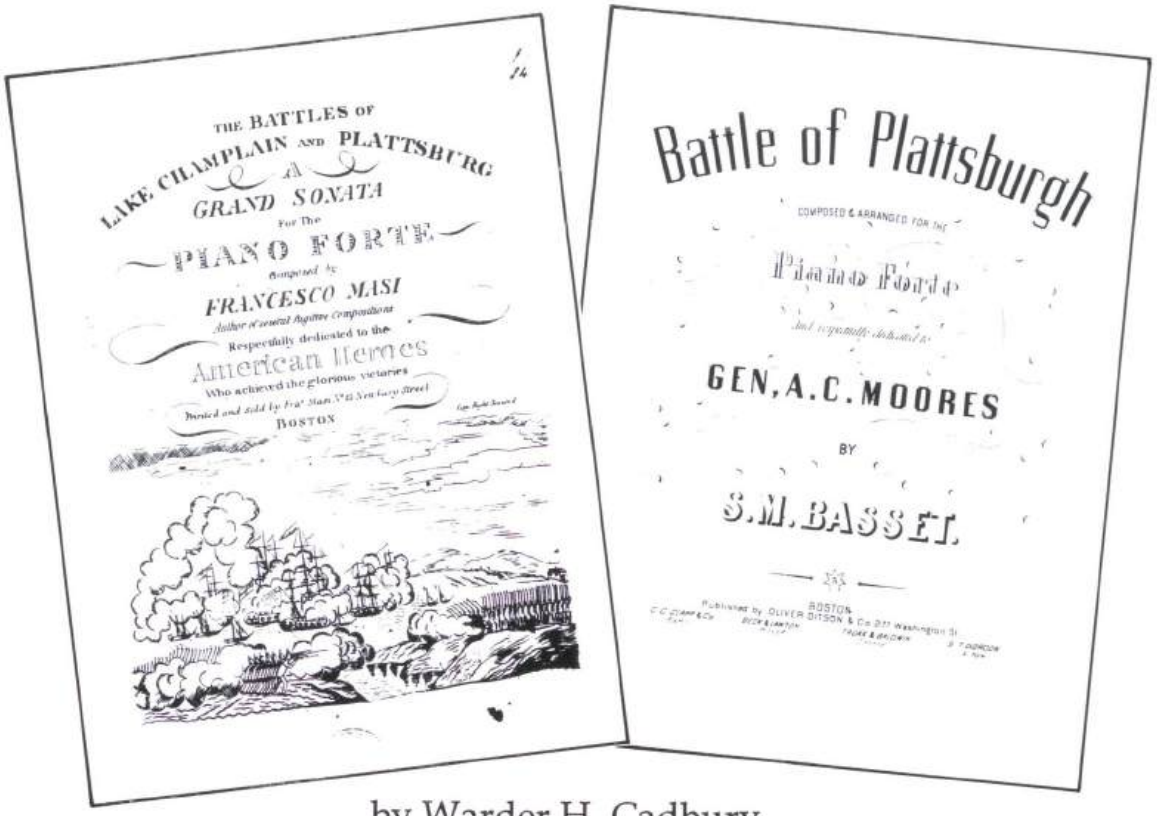
Mrs. Hall was also on the receiving end of support when it was needed. When she doubted her ability to fill the position of CC-WCTU president, Lucy Carleton responded very warmly and supportively, stating that FDH was the "only one with the time, money, and push." When FDH's much-loved husband Frank died in 1903, she received letters of commiseration from all of her friends. Julia Barney, state superintendent for prisons and jails, wrote, "I shall stay in the house and *keep the day with you*." Ada Beers expressed deep sympathy, stating "I love, love you, love you and think of you so much...I grieve more deeply than words can tell that this crushing sorrow must come to my best-loved friend."

FDH was a well-known and valued member of the WCTU in the county, state and nation. She was asked in 1901 to speak at the national convention by Nellie Hutchinson, who stated that she could easily rely on Mrs. Hall, "knowing that the matter is in safe hands." FDH remained president in Clinton County, yet extended her network far beyond anything possible outside of the WCTU. Once involved in such a supportive system that gave its members a great sense of importance, a woman would not be inclined to be satisfied merely with local church activities. Prompted by the opportunity and an inclination toward reform, women found in the WCTU a framework in which women could meet like-minded women. The friendships engendered strong commitments to the work and provided the glue that held the organization together. At this point of convergence, the WCTU served two purposes for the women involved: the eradication of the devil drink, and the maintenance of county, state and nationwide friendships.

On all levels of its organization, the WCTU grew and prospered because it was built on a network of supportive, loving relationships. Their work provided a reason for gathering, a socially legitimate reason which could be defended on the grounds of moral protection of the home. The question of which focus of the women involved was predominant cannot be easily answered and is in fact of little real importance. There is no doubt that these individuals were very dedicated to temperance but the support provided by their friendships kept them active and inspired. Both aspects of the WCTU were important to its internal functioning and overall success.

Susan Sweeney-Patnode submitted this essay for the McMasters prize in 1986. She is now the director of public affairs for the North Country Public Radio at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York.

The Music of Victory



by Warder H. Cadbury

With "artillery, oratory and song," declared the historian Benson J. Lossing, the nation celebrated the twin victories of September 11, 1814 on land and water at Plattsburgh, victories which had "produced a thrill of intense joy throughout the country." When he visited this area nearly a half century later in August 1860, to do pencil sketches and interviews to illustrate and inform his narrative, one such song was still remembered and Lossing, with his characteristic penchant for unusual local details, included its words in a long footnote.

While the artillery and oratory of the battles have since received most of the attention, the music of victory has been largely unsung. Thanks to a sojourn as visiting fellow last spring at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, which has a trove of Lossing manuscripts and sketches, I got started on the research for this informal report on the sheet music published to commemorate this signal event in Clinton County history.

The title given to the song by Lossing's informant was simply "The Siege of Plattsburg," but it was also called "Backside Albany" after its opening words. The piece has recently attracted unusual scholarly attention, since it turns out to be the earliest known Negro dialect song written by an American and performed in blackface a decade or two before burnt-cork minstrel shows began to make their unique contribution to the comic theater.

Cover of "The Siege of Plattsburgh, or Backside Albany", the earliest known Negro dialect song written by an American, 1815.

On February 7, 1815, an Albany newspaper announced that at the Green Street theater the following evening, in the intermission between performances of a tragedy and a farce, the versatile actor Hop Robertson would sing "a new song called 'The Siege of Plattsburgh, or Backside Albany' in the character of a *Negro sailor*." This may have been its first performance, and Governor Tompkins may, as Lossing reported long after the event, have been present as a first-nighter. The song quickly became popular, the press reporting that Robertson sang it again on a New York stage in June. The words were first published in the songster, *The Columbian Harmonist*, in Albany in 1815 with this notation: "Sung for several nights, with great applause, at a Theatre three thousand one hundred and sixty miles from London, in the character of a Black Sailor." It was reprinted in ten other popular songsters in the next fifteen years.

Backside Albany stan' Lake Champlain,
Little pond half full o' water;
Platteburg dar too, close 'pon de main;
Town small - he grow bigger, do herearter.
On Lake Champlain Uncle Sam set he boat,
An' Massa Macdonough he sail 'em;
While General Macomb make Platteburg
he home
Wid de army, whose courage nebber fail 'em.

On 'lebenth day September,
In eighteen hun'red and fourteen,
Gubberson Probose and he British soj-er
Come to Platteburg a tea-party courtin';
An' he boat come too, arter Uncle Sam boat.
Massa 'Donough he look shart out de winder;
Den Gineral Macomb (ah! he always a-home)
Gotch fire too, sirs, like a tinder.

Bang! Bang! Bang! den de cannons 'gin to roar,
In Platteburg and all 'bout dat quarter:
Gibbernonr Probose trye he han' pon de shore,
While he boat take he luck 'pon de water;
But Massa Macdonough knock he boat in
he head,
Break he heart, break he shin, 'tove he cave in,
An' Gineral Macomb start ole Probose home -
To't me soul den I muss died a laffin'.

Probose scare so he lef' all behine,
Powder, ball, cannon, tea-pot, an' kittle;
Some say he cotch a cole - trouble in he mine
'Cause he eat so much raw an' cole vittle.
Uncle Sam berry sorry, to be sure, for he pain,
Wish he nuse heself up well an' hearty
For Gineral Macomb and Massa
'Donough home
When he notion for anudder tea-party.

These verses were composed by Micah Hawkins, a colorful Manhattan innkeeper and grocer with varied musical and theatrical talents, the first native-born American to have composed a musical comedy with an American locale. He is reputed to have taught music to his nephew, the painter William Sidney Mount, whose sensitive portrayals of black musicians are still highly regarded. Hawkins had many opportunities to hear black dialects first hand, including that of his family's slave, Anthony Clapp, a fellow musician. In a poignant epitaph Hawkins wrote: "Though of a race despis'd...his artless music was a language universal and in its effect - most irresistible."

For a tune, Hawkins borrowed from a widely-

known Irish air, "Boyne Water." But words and melody were not published together in sheet music format until 1837. The cover is illustrated with a crude caricature of a black comic actor and it misspelled Micah Hawkins' first name.

In view of the subsequent history of blackface minstrelsy coming long after the battles of Plattsburgh, it is easy for the layman to fall victim to anachronisms; it is a serious mistake to regard this song and this illustration as denigrating the role of the black sailor in the War of 1812 and as making fun of all blacks for their illiterate manner of speaking. In a recent scholarly analysis of the song, Professor William J. Mahar of Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg makes a number of interesting points to help us avoid such mistaken interpretations of the work.

He reminds us that at the time the song appeared, everybody knew that one of the causes of the war was the British navy's kidnapping five sailors from the *Chesapeake* in 1807, of whom three were black. Between 20 and 30 percent of Macdonough's men were also black, many of whom were gunners. And it was reported that he replaced his white chaplain, whose moral character had been questioned, with a black steward who offered prayers before the battle. The song says nothing at all about blacks, or race relations. Rather, it ridicules the ineptness of the British commanders. The song's humor has admittedly not stood the test of time, but it was this ridicule, not the dark face and patois of the singer, which greatly amused the audience. The scholarly study by linguists of Black English has only recently come of age, and Mahar's analysis of various phonological, lexical and grammatical aspects of these verses reveals the song to have authentic roots in contemporary black dialects. Thus its language is neither an illiterate version of English nor a pseudo-dialect employed for the theatrical purpose of mocking black Americans.

After this blackface comic ballad, the next music to appear was a dramatic instrumental composition for the keyboard. In early June of 1815, a Boston newspaper announced the forthcoming publication by subscription of a grand sonata for the pianoforte entitled "The Battles of Lake Champlain and Plattsburg" at $1.50 a copy. The printed score, with a copyright date of July 29, 1815, has fifteen pages, and on the cover a somewhat primitive but charming woodcut of the land and water battles and a dedication "to the American heroes who achieved the glorious victories." The author was Francesco Masi, who arrived in the city several years earlier and advertised himself as a teacher of woodwind, brass and string instruments, and with "certificates from the church of St. Peter's in Rome."

Masi's ambitious work is a specialized genre of program music called battle pieces, in which the composer tries to mimic or suggest in sound the sequence of events in the fight. The printed editions almost always included between-the-lines brief explanatory descriptions of the unfolding story, but it is not clear to contemporary scholars how musicians presented battle pieces to audiences. Were there placards, or spoken narrative, or some kind of pantomine?

For the layman today, Masi's captions (with spelling corrected) convey something of the spirit of the enterprise:

> Maestoso: The approach of the land and naval forces - the colors hoisted, and men called to quarters
> Grave: Confusion of the inhabitants
> Allegro moderato: The fleet and army, animated by their officers
> Allegro: The militia and volunteers join the regulars
> Trumpet: Cheering the Green Mountaineers - the Americans make disposition for battle
> Grand March: The enemy approach the fort
> Allegro Molto: Attack - the Americans make a sortie from the forts - The British retreating, Americans pursue - The drum and fife signals for the Americans to form - The British commander rallies his troops - Enemy defeated again
> The Trumpets of Victory
> Poco piu adagio: Americans comfort their wounded - Cannon signal to inform the Army of the success of the fleet
> Allegro: Attack, the roaring of the artillery from the fleet - the enemy ships strike their flag - the sailors rejoicing at the victory
> Largo: Cries of the wounded - burial of the dead
> Allegro: Victory, grand national salute, on account of the victory
> Finale: Yankee Doodle

The third piece of sheet music to be considered, *Erie and Champlain, An Ode*, was a double-barrelled

celebration based on the coincidence that the triumphs at Plattsburgh came just a year and a day after Perry's naval exploits, but in the very same month of September which "twice beheld freemen the victors in war." It was sung to the tune of "Hail to the Chief" at a great anniversary concert on September 11, 1820 by the Columbian Society at Chatham Garden in New York, and words and music were published soon thereafter. Part of the second verse (of three) proclaims:

Rous'd by the spirit that conquer'd for Perry
Dauntless McDonough advanc'd to the fray:
Instant the glory that brighten'd Lake Erie,
Burst on Champlain with splendor of day.
Loud swells the cannon's roar
On Plattsburg's bloody shore,
Britons retreat from the tempest of war,
Prevost deserts the field
While the gallant ships yield -
Victory! Glory! COLUMBIANS Hazza!

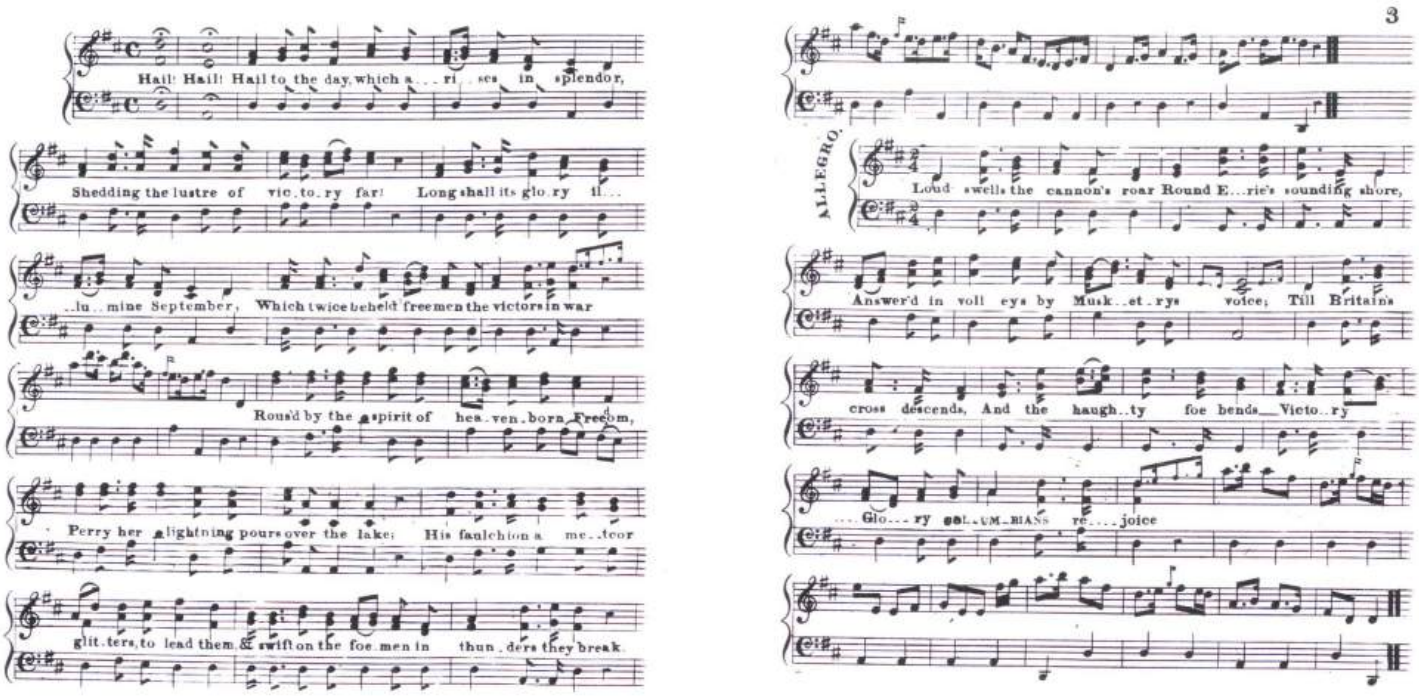
ERIE AND CHAMPLAIN,

Or Champlain **AN ODE** and Plattsburg,

Written by S. WOODWORTH for the
COLUMBIAN — SOCIETY,
in Celebratio of the Glorious 10th & 11th of Septembers.

NEW YORK

Published by J.A & W. Geib No. 23 Maiden Lane.



2

Hail to the day, which in splendor returning
Lights us to conquest and glory again;
Time told a year—still the war torch was burning,
And threw its red ray on the waves of Champlain,
Rous'd by the spirit that conquer'd for Perry,
Dauntless Mc Donough advanc'd to the fray;
Instant the glory that brighten'd lake Erie,
Burst on Champlain with the splendor of day.
Loud swells the cannon's roar
On Plattsburg's bloody shore,
Britons retreat from the tempest of war,
Prevost desert's the field
While the gallant ships yield—
Victory! Glory! COLUMBIANS Hazza!

3

Hail to the day, which, recorded in story
Lives the bright record of unfading fame;
Long shall COLUMBIANS, inspir'd by its glory,
Hail its returning with joyous acclaim.
Victory scatter'd profusely the laurel,
Over our Heroes, on land and on flood;
Britain astonish'd relinquish'd the quarrel,
Peace saw her olive arise from the blood.
Now cannons cease to roar,
Round Freedom's peaceful shore,
Silent and hush'd is the war bugle's voice;
Let festive joys increase
In the sunshine of peace,
Peace gain'd by Victory—FREEMEN, rejoice!

The next musical item, *Battle of Plattsburgh,* though undated, was published long after the event, in about 1858. The title page misspelled the name of the composer, Simeon M. Bassett, a self-styled professor of music from Keeseville. In 1841 he returned home from the Academy of Music in Boston, where he had studied church music. He advertised for students in voice and all variety of instruments, and in 1844 conducted a concert in Chazy.

The title page also misspelled the name of Amasa Corbin Moore (1801-1865), to whom the piece was dedicated. A son of Pliny Moore of Champlain, he married the daughter of General (of militia) Benjamin Mooers, a marriage which has been a bugbear for genealogists ever since. It is puzzling why Amasa was called general, since he was known as colonel for much of his life. Even this must have been a militia rank, since he was too young for the War of 1812 and too old for the Civil War. Coincidentally, Benson Lossing called upon him in the old family home on the corner of Bridge and Peru Streets, and sketched the cannonball embedded in an interior wall.

This composition is a belated revival of the old battle-piece format. We cannot reproduce here the eight pages of the score, but the programmatic notes of its succeeding sections are of interest:

> Sunday morning. Trumpet. Movement in the British Camp
> Fifes and Drums in the American Camp.
> Ringing of Bells
> The inhabitants rushing across the Bridge. The British attempt to cross the Sarranac [sic] river, but are repulsed by the inhabitants and soldiers with great loss.
> Maestoso: Battle commences between the English and American fleets.
> Andante: "God save the King" is faintly heard in the distance amidst the roar of battle.
> Presto: Movement of light troops.
> McDonough's flag ship disabled.
> Heavy cannonade. Surrender of the English fleet. Rejoicing at the surrender of the British fleet, while the land forces engage in the contest with more energy.
> Adagio: Lamentation for the slain.
> Agitato: Night. Retreat of the British, leaving their dead and wounded.

In conclusion, it should be noted that at the time of the commissioning of the *"USS Lake Champlain"* in 1988, there appeared *American Victory,* with lyrics by Gary Gerth and music by Ted Caragol. The cover of this sheet music in bright colors does not lend itself to reproduction here, but it shows the familiar battle scene as painted in 1884 by Julian O. Davidson, a canvas owned by the Key Bank at Plattsburgh.

If readers know of other musical items about Champlain or the Adirondack Mountains, I would be grateful for news of them.

Dr. Warder Cadbury is a professor of philosophy at the State University at Albany and pursues Adirondack history as an extracurricular activity. Among his published works is his biography of Arthur F. Tait, Adirondack artist, and his editing of a recent reprint of Wm. H.H. Murray's Adventures in the Wilderness.

FURTHER READING

MUSIC OF VICTORY

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A dossier with copies of the full score of each of these musical pieces, as well as some articles from professional journals is on file in Special Collections of the Feinberg Library at the State University in Plattsburgh.

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The Quarterly of the St. Lawrence Historical Association, July 1989.

WCTU

The essay is based upon the 'WCTU' column in the ***Plattsburgh Sentinel*** between 1888 and 1899 and is available on microfilm in both the Plattsburgh Public Library and Special Collections at the college library; also on Mrs. Hall's papers in the Kent-Delord Collection at Special Collections.

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